ENGLISH DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE.*

The history of domestic architecture in England is still for the most part unwritten, and would form the substance of a highly interesting work. From the remains, so often ploughed up in our fields, of villas with tesselated pavements, and baths of very artificial construction, there can be no doubt that the Romans, during their occupation of the island, introduced very generally their own style of house building; and the Britons themselves probably copied from them to a certain extent, as their descendants evidently did in the plan and decoration of their religious edifices. But from the complete absence of any remnants of the British habitations of that day, it is useless to speculate on their form or materials. The same remark applies to the Saxon era; for the few circular or square towers of three or four stories, which are the most ancient buildings we can trace in the island after the departure of the Romans, were apparently erected rather as military posts for the protection of the country, or as places of temporary refuge during an invasion, than as permanent residences. Conigsburgh in Yorkshire, and Castleton in Derbyshire, are some of the largest and best preserved examples of these early Saxon fortresses, if they, in truth, belong to that era.

But our Saxon ancestors reared few such places of strength. Their habits were peaceful and agricultural rather than warlike; and they lived, as William of Malmsbury informs us, in low and mean houses, having no pretensions either to splendour or strength. It was, indeed, this defenceless condition of the island which rendered it so easy a prey to the Norman conqueror; and it was to remedy this defect, and secure his newly acquired dominions, as well against invasions from without as rebellions within, that William lost no time in erecting strong castles in all the principal towns of his kingdom, as at Lincoln, Rochester, Norwich, &c., for the double purpose of strengthening the towns and keeping the citizens in awe. His followers, among whom he had parcelled out the lands of the English, had likewise to protect themselves against the resentment of those they had despoiled, and imitated their master's example by building castles on their estates. The turbulent and unsettled state of the kingdom during the succeeding reigns caused the rapid multiplication of these strong-holds, until, in the latter end of the reign of Stephen, there are said to have been no fewer than 1,115 castles completed in England alone. "The whole kingdom," says the author of the *Saxon Chronicle*, "was covered with them, and the poor people worn out with the forced labour of their erection." It was soon found, also, that they were likely to be no less inconvenient to the sovereign, enabling a cabal of barons to beard the power of their liege lord; and one of the first acts of Henry II. was to prohibit the erection of any castle without a licence.

Many of the castles of this age were of great size, and possessed a certain rude grandeur of design. To the simple keep-tower of earlier date several other towers, both round and square, were added, united by flanking walls, so as to enclose a polygonal court-yard, the entrance to which was usually between two strong contiguous towers. An outwork, called the barbican, often still further defended the approach, as well as a moat and drawbridge. Plates of iron covered the massive doors, in front of which the grated portcullis was let down through deep grooves in the stone-work; and overhead projected a parapet resting on corbels, between which were the openings called machicolations, from which melted lead, hot water, and stones could be thrown on the heads of the assailants who should attempt an entrance by forcing, or, as was the usual mode of attack, firing the doors. The gateways of Caerlaverock, Tunbridge, Conway, Carlsbrook, and Caernarvon are good specimens of this kind. The keep-tower, or strong-hold, rose pre-eminently above the rest, and generally from an artificial mound. It contained the well, without which the garrison would not have been enabled to hold out in this their last place of refuge; the donjon or subterranean prison, the name of which was often extended to the whole keep; and several stories of apartments, which were probably not occupied by any but retainers, except during a time of siege. The staircase which communicated with these stories was either pierced in the thickness of the walls, or built on the outside of the tower.

After the age of Edward III., we find a considerable improvement in the character of the habitations which remain to us. By degrees it was found possible to associate much convenience and magnificence with the strength requisite for defence; and the former confined plan of the close fortress expanded into a mixture of the castle and the mansion. The courts were multiplied. The tilt-yard surrounded by the stables and domestic offices occupied one. A second gate-way led from thence into the inner court, which was often double, and environed by the principal living range, consisting of spacious and magnificent apartments, the hall, the banquetting-room, the chapel, with galleries of communication and numerous sleeping chambers. The windows were often large and beautifully ornamented, but always high above the ground, and looking inwards to the court. The keep was always entirely detached and independent of these buildings. Such was the royal palace of Windsor erected by Edward III., and such the splendid baronial castles of Warwick, Ludlow, Spofford, Harewood, Alnwick, Kenilworth, Ragland, and many others. The last mentioned is one of the most perfect examples we are acquainted with of the union of vast strength and security with convenient accommodation and great ornamental splendour. The keep is a perfect fortress in itself, and encircled by a range of minor towers and moat. Its masonry is unrivalled.

At a later period, a still further change took place. The powers of the barons had long since yielded to the growing dominance of the crown, backed by the wealthy and commercial classes inhabiting the towns, who were admitted to a considerable share of political power, and strongly supported the royal authority, as a necessary protection for their peaceful and industrious pursuits, and for the wealth which they accumulated through these means. The reign of law, in short, had gradually succeeded to that of the strong hand. The peaceable were able to trust to the executive for the defence of their persons and property, rather than to the strength of their own walls, or the falchions and iron mail of their friends and retainers. The residences of the nobility and rich landed proprietors again assumed, though by degrees, and, with the exception of some districts, like the borders of England and Scotland, a civil in place of a military appearance. Beauty and ornament were consulted by the builders instead of strength, and the convenient accommodation of the ordinary indweller, in lieu of the means for disposing of a crowded garrison, and its necessary provision in time of siege. The mansions erected under these circumstances partook but slightly of the castellated character. They usually retained the moat and battlemented gateway, and one or two strong turrets, to build which a royal license was necessary; but their defensive strength could only have availed against a sudden and momentary attack. They were generally quadrangular in form, the larger class enclosing two open courts—of which one contained the stables, offices, and lodging of the household; the second, the principal or state chambers, with the hall and chapel. Large and lofty bay-windows, reaching almost to the ground, and several of them opening to the gardens on the outside of the building, though these were enclosed by high battlemented walls, and generally by a moat likewise, evidenced a sense of comparative security from external violence. Wingfield manor-house, in Derbyshire; Cowdray, in Sussex; Kelmingham Hall, in Suffolk; Penshurst, in Kent; Deene Park, in Northamptonshire; and Thornbury Castle, in Gloucestershire, are some of the richest specimens extant of the highly ornamented embattled mansions of the time of Henry VII. and VIII., the period of transition from the castle to the palace, and undoubtedly the best era of English architecture.

Such buildings differed but little from the monastic residences of the same, or of an earlier date. The lordly abbot emulated the proud baron in all the outward demonstrations of wealth, and perhaps more than rivalled him

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establishment. It seems probable, indeed, that the latter merely imitated the improved accommodations and still increasing magnificence which these cloistered *virtuosi* were the first to invent or copy from their continental brethren.

Of the minor country residences of that and the earlier reigns, many interesting examples remain scattered through the island, sometimes fulfilling their original destination, but far more frequently employed only as farm-houses, and going fast to decay. Except in an occasional moat, the embattled gateway, and a strong wall generally embattled also, enclosing the court-yard on those sides where the buildings were wanting, they exhibit but few means of defence.

The leading causes of the decay of those goodly halls which were formerly so thickly strewn over the face of this country, that scarcely a parish or a manor was without one or more examples, have been the concentration of landed property into larger estates and fewer hands, which has been gradually in progress through the last century or more, and the increasing predilection of our wealthy classes for the gaieties of the metropolis or the crowded watering-place, rather than the quiet and simple enjoyments of the rural residence.

In a few of the houses built during the reign of the last of the Henrys, we may observe some slight traces of the *Italian* architecture, which in the next reign was more liberally introduced and mixed up with the original Tudor, or early English, into an irregular certainly, but in most instances, an exceedingly rich and effective composition.

At this late period the intercourse between the different states of Europe had become considerable, and the fame of the Italian architects was a subject of deep interest in this country, where the rage for building was no less strong and general than in Italy. In the brilliant reign of Elizabeth, the English nobles and princely proprietors vied more than ever with each other in the magnificence of their mansions. It might have been supposed that the noble Tudor houses, such as we have described them, with their panelled walls, buttresses, and battlements, traceried windows, sculptural dripstones, florid pinnacles, and embossed chimney-shafts, were sufficiently rich and gorgeous to satisfy the prevailing taste for splendour; but in their anxiety to strike and surprise the admiration of their countrymen, many deserted the native styles, and sought for designs, and even artists from abroad. Italian architecture became, by degrees, the mode, and, even where the indigenous style was adhered to in the general design, many of the enrichments and ornamental features were borrowed from the Italian. First of all the porch, or gateway, as the most conspicuous points on which to exhibit these exotic novelties, were decorated on either side the entrance, not perhaps a second and third story above with pilasters belonging to the different Greek orders; the doorway itself exchanged the low pointed, or Tudor, for the circular arch,—the deep, elegant, and sweeping Gothic mouldings for the Vitruvian architrave, cut across by the awkward projecting imposts. The porch of Milton Abbey, built in the reign of Henry VIII., is one of the earliest examples of this innovation. Lower Marney Hall, in Essex, built in the same reign, is another. In plan it is a regular embattled quadrangular mansion built entirely of brick. The gate-tower is flanked by large and lofty octagonal turrets with narrow pointed windows, but topped with lotus-leaved ornaments and scrolls instead of battlements, while the mullions of the large windows terminate above in debased Ionic capitals; all these enrichments are moulded in brick.

Next was introduced the cupola, whose invention in Italy had made so much noise, that it appears our country squires were anxious to have miniature specimens of it at home. It was applied as a covering to the high turrets, round, square, or polygonal, which flanked the entrance, or terminated the angles of the building, and surmounted with gilded vanes, certainly produced a rich and imposing effect, as we experience in Burleigh and Cobham. The parapet over the porch and the projecting windows, was, at the same time exchanged for the pediment: and busts of the twelve Cæsars and similar devices took the place of the ancient [illegible] shields. Then follows